



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

Cascades compression

I was among those who thought the roundabout was a good idea. I still do—they work—though some of the motoring theatrics I observed this weekend might cause one to have legitimate second thoughts. For a moment, tourist-watching from my favorite surveillance hide-hole in the Ray's parking lot, the roundabout sounded like lower Manhattan, horns ablaze, tires squealing, and wild oaths being issued, as touring cars bristling with kayaks and canoes and jammed full of vaping hipsters barreled relentlessly into our very own theater in the round.

We will have some wrecks there before people figure it out. Let's hope they aren't serious.

In other news, I'm very

excited about the crush of visitors for this eclipse bonanza, which will, no doubt, add another layer of derring-do to the "roundy-run." Tens of thousands of them are coming, and if you listen closely you can almost hear the determined swarm, like a cloud of locusts, buzzing somewhere just over the horizon.

I confess that I don't understand why the eclipse is such a big deal. Without trying to be humbug about the whole thing, I just don't get it. But then again, if Moses were making a surprise appearance at the Les Schwab amphitheater, I probably wouldn't go. Not because I have anything against Moses, it's just — you know — the behavior of crowds.

The other swell development in summer compression will be the Rainbow Family gathering out near John Day. A hippy flashmob of some 30,000 people chortling bongos, and banging on drums will — if they stick to tradition — spend a week or two trashing large portions of the National Forest, stealing from local stores, aggressively panhandling, and leaving environmental ruin in their wake. A more intrepid

journalist than I did the math on the sheer tonnage of human waste left behind by the Living Light crowd, and the numbers are staggering.

I'll spare you the truly disgusting details.

They are, of course, free to assemble, and because they are allegedly a leaderless group — though they do have a marvelous role for more disciplined hippies known as a "focalizer" — no one can, or will, force them to do what the rest of us have to do for such a blowout, which is to get a permit.

The Forest Service usually budgets about a half-million dollars to monitor these gatherings, so not only do they not pay for a permit, at the end of the day, it's you and I who are paying for the big peace-party. Which — any focalizer will tell you — is appropriate for us Babylonians.

In fairness, the record on Rainbow behavior, and the damage they do to forests, is mixed, and depends entirely on who is doing the talking. I hope for the best, but I'm fairly certain that if a rancher — who grazes on a permit — tore up a forest meadow the way 30,000 hippies and their cars are going to do

it, he would be filleted by everyone from Greenpeace to the National Cattleman's Association.

The big rhinoceros in the room, of course, is that there are just too many of us. We've done a bang-up job of overpopulating the planet, and there are fewer and fewer places to escape the crush of humanity. Particularly when the weather is good.

In local business terms, that's good for what the Chamber and others refer to as "sticky dollars," but it means we have to endure the seasonal invasion of people who don't care about our community as much as we do.

Which brings me to Michael Wolf, the celebrated photographer, who by recording daily life in cities has become a kind of prophet. Born in Germany, raised virtually everywhere else, and now based in Hong Kong, Wolf's images of the daily commute on the Tokyo subway — a series he first started in 2010, is a disturbing glimpse into the future that we are building for our descendants, and yes, even in places as lovely as Central Oregon.

Invariably, the photographs are tightly constricted

in the frame, and present the face of a hapless commuter, face, hands, ears, pressed into the glass, earbuds in, dread written in the eyes, and the condensation from so many tightly packed humans obscuring the image ever-so slightly. It's virtually raining inside the subway car, and the people are contorted into what can only be described as "stress positions," of the kind generally reserved for extraordinary renditions and Gitmo interrogations.

The series, known as "Tokyo Compression," reveals a kind of horrifying desperation, an almost trancelike embrace of misery. Perhaps the most important element of the photographs, what makes them so intensely and uniquely disturbing, is that these are, after all, everyday events — just regular people like you and me, trying to get to work, or to get home.

We aren't there just yet. But a temporary dip into any one of our big-city neighbors — even Bend, where the traffic now resembles many of the places people fled from to begin with — can give us all a taste of what is coming this way.

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